

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 COME-00 EB-04 RSC-01 /016 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1959

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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BEIRUT FOR COMATT ALEXANDER OR ECON WARING

DEPT FOR NEA/ARN

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, ELTN, SY

SUBJECT: TRADE OPPORTUNITY: GENERAL MOTORS VEHICLES DESIRED BY SYRIA

1. WELL-KNOWN SYRIAN BUSINESSMAN SAEB NAHAS INFORMED ECON OFF OF HIS NOVEMBER 1 DISCUSSIONS IN BEIRUT WITH GENERAL MOTORS (GM) REPS JAMES P. O'DONNELL AND RAYMOND G. NASH AT WHICH TIME NAHAS INFORMED GM OF SYRIAN NEED TO PURCHASE IMMEDIATELY 300 CREW CAB PICK-UP TRUCKS. NAHAS SAID NASH AGREED TO HAVE NEW YORK OFFICE (GM OVERSEAS SISTRIBUTORS CORP, 767 FIFTH AVENUE, NY 10022) TELEX DIRECTLY TO NAHAS BY NOVEMBER 4 QUOTATIONS ON THESE VEHICLES. NASH ALSO GAVE NAHAS DEALERSHIP APPLICATION FORM TO FILL OUT AGAIN (NAHAS SAID HE HAD DONE THIS ONCE BEFORE THIS SUMMER). NAHAS IS CONCERNED HE HAS NOT HEARD FROM GM BEIRUT OR NEW YORK SINCE NOVEMBER 1, PARTICULARLY NECESSARY QUOTATION.

2. NAHAS NOW SAYS SYRIA NEEDS TO PLACE LARGER ORDER FOR MIX OF GM COMMERCIAL AND PASSENGER VEHICLES AND HE WANTS TO DISCUSS THIS WITH O'DONNELL ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, IN BEIRUT. AS INDICATION OF HIS SERIOUSNESS, NAHAS SAYS HE WILL PROVIDE O'DONNELL WITH L/C FOR \$1 MILLION EVEN BEFORE HE RECEIVES GM PRICES AND ALSO WILL RETURN COMPLETED DEALER-

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SHIP APPLICATION.

3. NAHAS SAYS HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY GM IS APPARENTLY COOL ON DEALING THROUGH HIM. HE CLAIMS IF GM DOES NOT GO THROUGH HIM, IT WILL NOT GET INTO SYRIA, EG., VIA KUWAITI OR LEBANESE AGENTS. O'DONNELL IS FAMILIAR WITH KUWAITI EFFORT HERE WHICH HERETOFORE, SAYS NAHAS, HAD ADVANTAGE OF CASH OVER CREDIT REQUEST OF NAHAS. NAHAS NOW SAYS SYRIA WILL PAY CASH AND THUS THE INITIAL AND IMMEDIATE \$1 MILLION L/C. (FYI: WE HAVE NO DOUBT NAHAS IS WELL-CONNECTED BUT WE OBVIOUSLY CANNOT COMMENT ON WHY GM MAY OR MAY NOT BE COOL TOWARD HIM. END FYI.)

4. ACTIONS REQUESTED:

A. BEIRUT: PLEASE CALL O'DONNELL EARLY THURSDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 14, RELAY ABOVE INFO, AND ARRANGE APPOINTMENT FOR NAHAS, A AND CALL ECONOFF WHO CAN RELAY TIME TO NAHAS.

B. NEA/ARN: WE BELIEVE IT APPROPRIATE FOR YOU TO CALL GM NEW YORK TO ASK ABOUT PROMISED QUOTATIONS SO AS TO ENCOURAGE GM TO TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT SYRIAN MARKET AND HAVE AMERICAN VEHICLES FOLLOW SYRIAN BLOCK PURCHASES OF PUGEOTS (\$21 MILLION FOR 5,000 VEHICLES, SAYS NAHAS, WHO ARRANGED THIS DEAL) AND 800 FIAT BUSES.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROCUREMENT, GROUND VEHICLES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974DAMASC02679
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740328-0415
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741144/aaaablhe.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUL 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <18 MAR 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TRADE OPPORTUNITY: GENERAL MOTORS VEHICLES DESIRED BY SYRIA
TAGS: ETRD, ELTN, SY, GENERAL MOTORS
To: STATE BEIRUT
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005